The Homeric Simile and the Beginning of Philosophy

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Translated by David R. Lachterman

Translator's Preface

Kurt Riezler (1882-1955) is quite probably already known to many readers of *The St. John's Review* in virtue of his book *Man: Mutable and Immutable. The Fundamental Structure of Social Life* (Chicago, 1950) and Leo Strauss' *éloge* printed in *What Is Political Philosophy?*. Riezler's somewhat astounding civic and administrative careers during the Wilhelmine and then the Weimar regimes in Germany have been lucidly recorded in Wayne C. Thompson, *In the Eye of the Storm. Kurt Riezler and the Crises of Modern Germany* (univ. of Iowa, 1980). His scholarly career began with a monograph on ancient Greek political economy and produced in the years before his exile in the United States two philosophical treatises, *Gestalt und Gesetz: Entwurf einer Metaphysik der Freiheit* (Munich, 1924 [=Form and Law: Sketch of a Metaphysics of Freedom] and *Traktat vom Schonen: Zur Ontologie der Kunst* (Frankfurt a.M., 1935) [=Treatise on the Beautiful: Towards an Ontology of Art], as well as a notable edition and translation of Parmenides' poem (Frankfurt a.M., 1934). In the United States,in addition to *Man: Mutable and Immutable*, he wrote *Physics and Reality: Lectures of Aristotle on Modern Physics* (New Haven, 1940) and a lengthy essay "Political Decisions in Modern Society," published in Ethics 44 (1954). It is perhaps worth noting that Riezler regarded Heidegger as his most important 'teacher', although he appears to have read him through Goethean lenses.

The essay translated below, under the title "Das Homerische Gleichnis und der Anfang der Philosphie, appeared in the periodical *Die Antike* 12 (1936), pp. 253-271. Curiously, Riezler prints the German versions of R. Schröder and Voss von Rupé together with the pertinent Greek texts of Homer. I have followed his practice by translating these from German into English, even when there are marked departures from the wording or syntax of the original Greek. The notes are my own.

The poet sees and announces the soul as world, the world as soul. The unity of the two is his secret. Goethe, in his *Maxims*, calls art the go-between, the agent of an "unknown law in the object, corresponding to the unknown law in the subject."

The concepts with which the aesthetic, psychological, philosophical tradition in which we live grapple with this secret stem from a way of thinking for which the basic fact is the antecedent division of subject and object, soul and world. Face to face with the original unity which is poetry's secret this initial rending of the question can only flee into the asylum of the 'irrational.' The irrational, however, designates the unknown only relatively to a ratio; this ratio falls silent in the presence of this unknown.

The beginnings of Greek philosophy antedate the separation of subject and object. Even for Plato the question of the soul is ultimately at one and the same time the question of the world. For Heraclitus, as well as Parmenides, the greatest of Plato's predecessors, the φύσις, the κοινὸς λόγος, of both is something prior to the separation of subject and object, the true being of the soul as well as the world, and thus is cosmology and psychology at the same time. Here, too, the unity of the two questions explains why our concepts are unsuitable as well as why the inner meaning of these teachings remains inaccessible.

If both secrets—this inner meaning and that correspondence of an "unknown law"—are closed to us for the

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same reason, can we perhaps dare to get close to the one secret with the help of the other? Perhaps the question of the marvel of sensuous animation, when developed in terms of the perplexities posed by one concrete problem might be able to unveil the inner meaning of those teachings and find its way to that meaning in its own right.

The seeing and telling of the poet is a knowing of the senses and the soul. What is known is not the object as object. What is seen, told, known is Goethe's "unknown law": soul as world, world as soul.

Among the means for achieving this knowledge we find simile and contrast. Homer, the "wisest of the Greeks," uses both with equal mastery. Theophrastus (*de sensu*, I) divides the views of the Ancients in regard to knowledge into γνῶσις τῷ ὁμοίῳ and τῷ ἐναντίῳ—knowing through the similar and knowing through the opposite. According to him, Parmenides, Empedocles, Plato held the first view; the followers of Anaxagoras and Heraclitus, the second. Can we perhaps find in the poetic achievements of simile and contrast in Homer the meaning of this 'knowledge?' The issue itself will decide whether this question does or does not make sense.

I

This question must first be directed to those similes in which this achievement is most penetrating and surprising. These fall into the group in which the poet constructs the simile into a parallel narration, which then unfolds the whole image in a parenthesis in accordance with its own law, between a 'just as' and a 'so'-clause in a parenthesis and does this even though the narration itself is presented as a sensible, visible event and therefore does not seem to need the simile. Similes of this kind are peculiar to Homer. They are also the similes in face of which the concepts with which they are usually discussed reveal their inadequacy.

Od. XIX, 204-209:

"...the listening woman melted into flowing tears. As the snow gathered on the ridge of elevated mountains, snow which Winter made to fall, begins to stream as the Spring dissolves it and fills the bed of the running currents,

So the woman melted into tears; her cheeks ran for the husband, who sat next to her..."

(From the German of R.A. Schröder)

τῆς δ' ἄρ' ἀκουούσης ῥέε δάκρυα, τήκετο δέ χρώς.
ὡς δὲ χιὼν κατατήκετ' ἐν ἀκροπόλοισιν ὄρεσσιν,
ἣν τ' Εὖρος κατέτηξεν, ἐπὴν Ζέφυρος καταχεύῃ
τηκομένης δ' ἄρα τῆς ποταμοὶ πλήθουσι ῥέοντες
ὡς τῆς τήκετο καλὰ παρήϊα δάκρυ χεούσης,
κλαιούσης ἑὸν ἄνδρα, παρήμενον.

Here, in the first place, singling out one or more points of comparison, the whiteness of the snow and of the head, the streaming of the water and of the tears, is of no help at all. Perception? What becomes perceptible? Surely not Penelope's external form through mountains, snow, wind, currents. Mood? Certainly not in the sense that our mood when snow starts to melt is meant to let us feel Penelope's mood. The term "mood" is dangerous. Everything for which the history of the arts requires it is far away from Homer.

The simile embraces the entire destiny of Penelope and grasps in retrospect and prospect her inner destiny in the unity of an external image. We see her grown stiff and frozen over long, desolate years, see beneath the first, joyous news the hardness, the cold, the darkness begin to soften outside and inside, to grow warm; we see, by anticipation, even without the poet's speaking about it, in a single, mute self-movement of the image, the entire melting of the snow and see the life begin to glitter once again when Penelope for the first time begins to know that the stranger who brings the first news of her husband is himself this husband. The narrative itself, even if it had wanted to say all of this, could scarcely have linked together the elements which vibrate together and have related them to one another in the way the simile in the unity of its image succeeded in doing.

The terms 'intuition' and 'mood' court and contend for the marvel of 'animation.' The unity of simile and narrative actually accomplishes that marvel. The 'animation' seems a double one. Penelope's tears animate the inanimate snow but, the unanimated gives back two fold to the animated the animation if receives. In the presence of the first animation we usually stammer about transference and anthropomorphism but this way of talking is out of the question here. The second animation is the greater marvel: how can the dead event animate the living, not only for the Greeks, but for us as well, whose picture of Nature is unanimated?

Take a second example: *Iliad* XVII, 53-59.

Menelaus kills Euphorbus who, according to XVII, 811 is fighting in his first battle. They exchange words before they begin to fight. Menelaus reminds Euphorbus of his brother's arrogance and death. Euphorbus draws from the other's warning only the exhortation to avenge his brother and to put his parents' pain to rest by placing in their hands Menelaus' head and weapons. They fight Menelaus' spear strikes through the still delicate neck of Euphorbus and blood steeps the charming locks and the clasps of silver and gold which hold them together.

Everything is sensibly there; nothing non-sensible needs an intuition which only the simile might be able to give it.

Il. XVII, 53-59:

"As a man tends the swelling sapling of an olive tree/
In a lonely spot, where the water gushes up,/

Lofty it grows and stately, and the cooling drafts/
Of all the wafting winds set it gently in motion
And gleaming it burgeons in white flower.//
But, a wind suddenly coming with a powerful whirl/
Rips it from its pit and lays it down on the earth."
(Translated after Voss von Rupé)

οἷον δὲ τρέφει ἔρνος ἀνὴρ ἔριθηλὲς ἔλαίης
χώρῳ ἐν ο'ιοπόλῳ ὅθ' ἅλις ἀναβέβρυοχεν ὕδωρ,
καλὸν τηλεθάον· τὸ δέ τε πνοιαι δονέουσιν,
παντοίων ἀνέμων καί τε βρύει "ανθεϊ λευκῷ·
ἐλθὼ δ' ἐξαπίνης ἄνεμος δὺν λαίλαπι πολλῇ
βόθρου τ' εζέστρεψε καὶ ἐζετάνυσδ' επὶ γαίῃ·

Once again the simile and what it achieves are entirely transparent: the olive-tree, sheltered, cooled by winds, sparkling with white blossoms, now uprooted and laid low, embraces in the unity of a single image the parents' concern, rearing and suffering, the youth's beauty, gentleness and sudden end, animating the narrative and animated by it. Euphorbus' death, like Penelope's tears, is the manifestation of human-being [*Daseins*] itself, as a totality of powers which joined to one another prevail over and through man and nature, soul and world in the same fashion.

We would search in vain in these two similes for the basis of the reciprocal play of animation in the usual points of comparison and their aggregate. The whiteness and the running water in the simile of Penelope—what is qualitatively and objectively common leaves us in the lurch.

The third or middle terms of comparison are of a special sort. Not all cases of qualitative and objective commonness can be such *thirds*. The power of animation dwells only in those which, as in the simile of Penelope, are circumstances and movements both of things as well as of the soul—coldness, hardness, rigidity, warming, softening, dissolving—and as features of the first are also ways of being of the other. These *tertia* therefore are not only commonnesses, (κοινά) of any sort whatsoever, belonging to the simile and the narrative, but similarities (ὅμοια) of the subject and the object. Their peculiar character has no name in the conceptual language current among us. I want to avoid naming them.

However, these ὅμοια, each considered in its own right, are not the animating factor in these similes. Neither singly nor in their sum are they the true *teritium*. The key to the animation lies in their concatenation. On their own they are abstract and dead. The simile, like the narrative, interlaces them, lets them be what they are together with and through one another. Constantly trying to name them in isolation makes them lifeless. The *tertium* is an interweaving of these ὅμοια, which are joined to one another in simile and narrative in the same fashion, ἀνὰ τόναὐτὸν λόγον. The *tertium* is in a certain sense a *primum* It is clearly the function of the simile to detach us from the object as object. The poet forces our eye from Penelope's face to the snow-covered mountain, from the youth sinking downward to the uprooted olive-tree. In this the *objective* component of both the simile and the narrative and, indeed, the one through the other becomes transparent and now is no longer only object, but 'manifestation,' an image of something. The image is something seen from the first. It is not an image of the object as such, not Penelope nor the snow, but Goethe's "unknown law." *Physis*, the style of the entity, the Greeks named it. The analogous intertwining of those ὅμοια in simile and narrative is a particular aspect, a look, the *eidos* of the whole of this *physis*, which for Homer is not only human-being as a particular entity, but the being of all that is alive. And everything is alive, lively.

However, the Homeric similes are multiform. What they achieve in the narrative is in these two cases something particular, comprising the existence of Penelope as well as that of Euphorbus. In other cases the similes perform differently. However, what the simile achieves for the narrative must be grasped on the basis of what it achieves for poetry. The story narrated, even without the simile, is manifestation, is show and announcement in the transparence of appearance. The simile serves this achievement of the narrative in many different ways. The poet demands greater and lesser services.

Let us take first a much-discussed example of another kind, which surely can be felt even in a merely fleeting contact, like the litter of a butterfly's wing.

Od. V, 50. Hermes is flying over the sea, like a sea-gull.

Od. V, 50-53
"...descending from the aether he fell upon the surface of the high seas, stoutly he swept into it over the abyss, like the cormorant,/
Who fishes in the dread bow of the foaming, salty wave
And often streaks its wings with salt-foam."
(R.A. Schröder)

...ἐζ αἴθέρος ἔμπεσε ποντῳ
σεύατ' ἔπειτ' ἐπὶ κῦμα λάρῳ ὄρνιθι ἐοικώς,
ὅς τε κατὰ δεινοὺς κόλπους ἁλὸς ἀτρυγέτοιο
ἰχθῦ ἀγρώσσων πυκινὰ πτερὰ δεύεται ἅλμῃ·

The god doesn't catch any fish. The poet seems to be following the special image of the simile, over and above the so called *tertium*. No doubt he does this for the sake of the sensuous concretion of the sea-gull which we now see as a living gull in front of us. But, this senuous concretion achieves much more. Thanks to it what is quick is now also easy, effortless, playful mastery and control. Hermes would catch fish if he wanted to. Hermes' flight over the sea is the prelude to Odysseus' clumsy, unavailing raft. The image of men whose lives are difficult is present together with the image of the gods, the ῥεῖα ζῶντες. Each little word attends to the co-presence of the

difficult in the image of the easy. There are the δεινοὶ κόλποι of the waves; previously there was the staff with which Hermes deludes men's eyes or wakens the sleepers "whom he wills." The simile, like the contrast, is dependent on the transparence of the narrative.

What does the much censured blood-pudding in *Od.* XX, 25 achieve? Odysseus, reining in his fury at the maids, turns back and forth in his lair, with no means of overcoming the suitors.

Od. XX, 25-28:
"As one roasting meat keeps turning the pig's stomach full of fat and trickling blood/
Over the fire from one side to the other/
And the thoughts of the roast lingers in his mind..."
(R.A. Schröder)

ὡς δ' ὅτε γαστέρ' ἀνὴρ πολέος πυρὸς αἰθομένοιο
εμπλείην κνίσης τε καὶ αἵματος, ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα
αιόλλῃ μάλα δ' ὦκα λιλαίεται, ὀπτη θῆναι,
ὥς ἄρ' ὅγ' ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα ἑλίσσετο μερμηρίζων

What the simile achieves is simple: only the blood-pudding can achieve it. It alone links together into a unity Odysseus' turning to and fro with the completion of the "well-done" plan, finished on every side, as well as with the impatient desire of the hungry man. The service done to the poetry by the simile lies not in the points of comparison, but in their interlinking.

For the critic the blood pudding is encrusted with impressions which make its preparation unsuitable as a simile for needs of the soul. Nonetheless, this encrustation is post-Homeric.

The simile achieves still more, however not through the points of comparison and their interlinking, but through a deviation of the simile from the narrative, a technique quite frequent elsewhere in Homer. The blood-pudding becomes fully cooked; the plan does not. Athena lends the helpless Odysseus her assistance and summons him to sleep.

Here, as in many other passages, the difference between narrative and simile is an artful technique. It shows how the events should or could have unfolded, but did not. The lion with whom the suppressed hero is compared is killed; the hero finds an opening, and gets through. In such difference the co-presence of what didn't occur serves the living concretion, the 'shining-through' of existence just as it is. The actual in its own right, in its whatness [*Sosein*] is alive, 'concrete' and full of presence, in the midst of a swarm of possibilities among which it stands, threatened and needy, in hope, yearning, fear or blindness. In the world of the living the possible is actual and at work. In this insight, too, Homer is wiser than many of his critics. As the simile presses out beyond the strictly comparable Homer is allied with Shakespeare; in restricting himself to the *tertium* Goethe is separated from both.

A survey of this artful technique leads past many 'halting' and so easily censured Homeric similes, through nuancings of every kind, to the very disappearance of the comparable in the opposed.

In *Iliad* I, 86 the opposition has absorbed the similar and replaced the "so as" with an account of time.

As long as the golden day increase, the battle goes on hither and yon without any resolution.

Il. XI, 86-90:
"But, at the hour when woodsmen prepare a meal/
Deep in the glade of the mountain, once their arms have grown tired/
with felling mighty trees; they become/
sated with their labor and long now for refreshing food:/
Just then the Danaeans daringly broke through the enemy's ranks..."
ἦμος δὲ δρυτόμος περ ἀνὴρ ὠπλίσσατο δεῖπνον
οὔρεος ἐν βήσσῃσιν, ἐπεὶ τ' ἐκορέσσατο χεῖρας
τάμνων δένδρεα μακρά, ἄδος τέ μιν ἵκετο θυμὸν
αὐτοῦ τε γλυκεροῖο περὶ φρένας ἵμερος αἱρεῖ,
τῆμος σφῇ ἀρετῇ Δαναοὶ ῥήξαντο φάλαγγας—

The reckoning of time here conceals the comparison of Danaeans' exertion in battle with the heavy labor of the wood-cutter. The image, meanwhile, points at the same time to their discrepancy: for the first time in the image the Danaeans' courage and perseverance in battle becomes impressively visible; but, so, too, does the other, gentler side of life, everything about it which the words κόρος, ἄδος, γλύκερος, ἵμερος can attach to the resting wood-cutters—in the midst of the battle and without any other relation than that of time. (*cf.* Dante, *Inferno* II, i).

The so-called 'contrastive effect' merely poses a question; it does not supply the answer. What is the contrast meant to be? Alternation? Intensification? These terms do not reach the issue at which they are aimed.

In each and everyone of his mobile images Homer sees to it, through the smallest, unnameable details, that all the oppositions between which man's life is tensely strung always remain present to one another, that the bright stands close to the dark, the easy next to the difficult, fear next to courage, nothingness next to magnificence each inescapably linked to the other. He has a thousand ways of doing this. He avoids any *chorismos* of the 'εναντία—any isolation of the opposites from one another. Where the episode, as in the battles in the *Iliad*, is in opposition with itself, he interrupts the report of the battle and tells in a pair of verses about the marriage of a warrior who was just killed and about the days of his glory. In *Iliad* XIII, 1 he lets Zeus, looking down from Mt. Ida, train his shining eyes away from the battle around Troy and onto the friendly peoples of Thrace, peoples who drink milk, the most just among men. Or in *Iliad*

XXII, 145, with Hector breathlessly, passionately pursued by Achilles, and while the supposedly uninvolved poet is himself in the grip of the highest emotion, he lets the heroes race past the two sources of the river Scamander and pauses to depict them the one stream which rises from the warm spring, the other, cold as ice; there are the stone troughs, there in times of peace the women and the fair daughters of the Trojans used to wash their shimmering garments.

To be sure it is correct that the antithesis 'intensifies,' that, as Gottfried Hermann in his commentary on this passage in Aristotle's *Poetics* remarks, "*repente objecta pacis imago, certamen redditur terribilius,*" that in Rembrandt too "*et lumen ab umbra et umbra ab lumine tantam accipiat vim, quantam singular per se numquam habitura essent.*"[1]

But, is "intensification" really the ultimate expression for the poetic achievement of contrast? Homer does not intend only the most frightful battle, nor does Rembrandt intend only the darker darkness. What *is* there is something ultimate which is seen, which has no name—Goethe's "unknown law." *Physis* as the forming of the 'Being'" of every being which 'is' there, the source of the essentiality of every essence—this ultimate object of sight is fitted together indissolubly out of war and peace, out of the dark and the bright. Neither the battle nor the darkness is something which can be separated (χωριστόν). It is thanks to the light that the night *is*. Homer does not look for antithesis because it intensifies. He sees a whole, as that in accord with which the one as well as the other is meant to shine through; because this whole is and is seen, the contrast or antithesis intensifies. There is a way, in both poetry and painting, of contrasting opposites which does *not* intensify. In these cases, the dark and the bright, even when in contrast with one another, remain insubstantial and empty, For both are placed externally next to one another, out of a learned knowledge of contrastive effects, not of the vision of their unity, as the 'manifestation' of that nameless whole.

Let me return once more to Homer's similes. In *Iliad* XI, 547-557, 557-565, two successive similes are developed into complete images of the lion greedy for battle and the stubborn ass. Ajax is both. Homer has us leap from one image of battle to the lion, from the lion to the ass, from the ass to the next image of battle in complete detachment from the objectivity of the object. The changing of the battle-scenes themselves takes place as an exchange of similes. The oppressive phantasy of many interpreters would have liked to stick with either the ass or the lion. Ajax attacks, the hero attacks his inferiors, one against many: a lion storming about greedy for battle; before the crowd of dogs and shepherds who protect the herds with spears and torches he has to turn away, growling. Now, he, like an ass, under the blows of impotent youths who want to drive him forward, slowly grazes in a meadow and then goes back again satisfied, when and as he pleases. In attacking and returning it is one and the same hero, who imposes on the many inferiors the law of their action. The exchange of similes varies one and the same identity, the way a change of positions would do. In both images doing and suffering, courage and fear, power and powerlessness, rage and forbearance, the one and the many, the noble and the mean are linked together. The mode of interweaving changes something identical. The change is sudden, violent only as far as the *objective* is concerned; that in accord with which this *objective* is transparent as 'appearance' changes without any violence the aspect alone, which it offers as something identical—just as is done in every narrative of changing events, which shines through as poetic vision in keeping with that nameless element which in the changeable interweaving of its moments remains identical as a whole. A "weaker" poet might indeed be on his guard against letting his Ajax turn from a lion into an ass without any transition: only the most extreme power of "transparence" can know how to manage the objective character of the object [*mit dem Gegenstandlichen des Gegenstandes umspringen.*]

Iliad XVI, 751-776 embraces three similes in the unity of a single battle-scene. Tone, coloring, feeling are passionately intensified. Hector and Patroclus, the soldiers of the Trojans and the Danaeans fight inconclusively for the corpse of Cebrion. Patroclus, pouncing upon the corpse of Cebrion, is compared to a lion which, breaking into the stables, is hit in the breast—"his own power undoes him." Patroclus, however, is unwounded; the simile thus distances itself from the narrative, this time because Patroclus' imminent death is meant to be foreshadowed. Homer is rich in such advance indications through nuancing.

Just after that Hector leaps from his chariot: now both are like lions who fight on the top of the mountain for the carcass of a deer ἄμφω πεινάοντε, μέγα φρονέοντε (both hungering and both thinking high thoughts.) Now the crowds of the Trojans and the Danaeans storm against one another.

Il. XVI, 765-770.
"And as the Winds, the East and the South,
Vie with one another/to shake a thick wood
In the forest valley,/Beech and ash, the
Wild cornel with its long bark,/
So that they knock their pointed boughs against each other/and the noise of breaking branches
Rings out powerfully:/
Just so the Trojans and Danaeans rushed against
One another..."

(Voss-Rupé)

ὡς δ' Ἔυρός τε Νότος τ' ἐριδαίνετον ἀλλήλοαν
οὔρεος ἐν βήσσῃς βαθέην πελεμιζέμεν ὕλην

φηγόν τε μελίην τε τανύφλοιόν τε κράνειαν,
αἵ τε πρὸς αλλήλας ἔβαλον τανυήκεας ὄζους
ἠχῇ θεσπεσίῃ, πάταγος δέ τε ἄγνυμ ενάωνδ᾽
ὡς τρῶες καὶ Ἀχαιοὶ ἐπ᾽ ἀλλήλοισι θορόντες δήουν—

The simile does not depict the reciprocity of the battle "with little success," but depicts the warriors' unchained rage, passion, confusion in an image of the greatest agitation. An interpretation sticking to the objective relates the pointed carcasses to the pointed spears. But, the true *tertia* here are not of this sort. This image is followed immediately by the image of a dead man who, amidst the darting spears, the flying arrows, the hurled stones, lies there in a whirl of dust "mighty in his mightiness, the arts of the horses forgotten."

κεῖτο μέγας μεγαλωστὶ λελασμένος ἱπποσυνάων[776].

The corpse, too, is there from the start: the image of its rest follows upon the image of the totally unleashed battle. In this way Homer links life to death.

The images of battle in the *Iliad* hold good of the whole of human-being. They inflect the whole set of forces 'between' which life is alive. This 'between' is a term drawn from Plato's doctrine of the soul.

II.

If I turn now to the philosophical issues concealed here, this is not done for the sake of the poet. His understanding can do without the elucidation of those issues. We can understand the poet even when our aesthetic concepts shatter against his animated world.

The service which simile and contrast perform for 'animation' contains a philosophical problem of great merit. Here we can follow the hints given by this service only into the inner life of the first questions and answers of Greek philosophy. For the development of this philosophical problem I must refer to my *Traktat vom Schöonen* (Frankfurt, 1935).

The *tertia* of Homeric comparisons are of a special sort. They are not random commonalities of objects in simile and narrative. They seem to be so, because our question about them stops with their objective commonness, e.g., the white color, the running water. If we go on to ask about what is in these commonalities from which their animating power stems, their special character becomes visible. These *tertia* are what is common to soul and to things, to the inner and the outer.

The ὅμοια of simile and narrative are ὅμοια of subject and object. Even the antithetical pairs of contrastive effects are ὅμοια of this kind. The alliance of these ὅμοια with 'animation' concerns the issue itself and is not an historical matter, whether of Homer or of Greek philosophy. It accompanies the marvel of art everywhere, in every age and in every mode of art. The painter talks about values or valences of colors: opaque-clear, bright-dark, warm-cold. The animation of colors rests on the play of these 'values.' These values are common to the soul and to things. They are, let me say in passing, not sensible qualities of the eye alone; something in them is common to several senses. In the case of sounds, too, there is the bright and the dark, the warm and the cold. However, the problem of these 'intermodal' sense-qualities does not belong here.

For an age in which qualities, properties and attributes have lived for centuries in a lasting marriage to things and regions of things the problem of these κοινά and their mode of being has been lost. This age explains the common in terms of 'transference.' The term "metaphor" is late; it stems from the time when that lasting marriage was concluded and the tie between thing-region and property was fixed. Transference, however, explains nothing. The ὅμοιον which it is meant to explain precedes it as something in the things on the basis of which the transference is possible and meaningful. Besides, the Homeric similes are no metaphors. The two lions are not μέγα φρονέοντε in virtue of metaphor. Nor is μεγάθυμος or "high-minded" a metaphor. Greatness and height are not originally properties of trees and mountains, tied to bodily space. There 'is' greatness and height in the soul just as there is in trees and mountains prior to the separation of subject and object.

Under the 'jurisdiction' of mythical thinking the image is the very thing itself. The unity of image and thing counts as the decisive mark of this mythical thinking; however, the unity rests on nothing other than the fact that for this thinking a κοινόν of image and thing is the original being, πρώτως ὄν prior to the objective duality of both: the leonine, therefore, manifest as a first and as the same in this lion and that lion, in its image and in many other instances. The jurisdiction of mythical thinking, however, is at the same time freedom from that enslavement to the object in which we live. Something of this spell and the freedom it confers extends to the similes of Homer, indeed, over and above these, to the end of all poetry and, perhaps,—of all philosophy.

I do not presume to settle anything about the mode of being of these κοινά. I shall not even give them a name drawn from the later history of philosophy. Their nature is ἄτοπόν τι. They are, in any case, neither objects nor concepts. I want to accept them as the poet announces them, without giving them a name: as ways of being, situations, powers, essential features of an existence which is at once the being of the soul and of things.

The poet lets these κοινά 'appear': he reveals them as what shines through in sound, tone, word, rhythm, object. These κοινά of subject and object are therefore manifestly κοινά of the so-called 'form' and, at the same time, of the so-called 'content,' 'values' of the vowels,

consonants, of the syllables, words and sentences, of tone and rhythm, as well as qualities of what these tonalities designate. This 'common,' too, is ἄτοπόν τι and, as a problem of the issue itself, accompanies the marvel of all art. 'Form' and 'content' or what we try to separate under these terms reciprocally animate one another just as simile and narrative do. The root of this reciprocal animation is the same in both cases.

Philosophy, that poor hobbler on the crutch of the concept, has to try to name what the poet allows to 'appear.' We have names for such κοινά from the beginnings of philosophy: the warm and the cold, the dense and the rare, the bright and the dark, the heavy and the light and so on. The ὅμοιον and ἐναντία based on γνῶσις τῷ ὁμοίῃ ἢ τῇ ἐναντίῃ are of this kind. They are κοινά of the soul and and things—not the 'material' elements, the designation under which they entered into our philosophical tradition from the reports of the Aristotelians. As κοινά they provide the basis for knowledge. Goethe (*Farbenlehre, historischer Teil*, I) says about Empedocles' 'pores': "We can also observe that this ancient did not take this idea so crudely and corporeally as many moderns have; instead, he merely found there a more convenient symbol. For the manner in which the outer and the inner are each present for the other, in which the one is on harmony with the other, bears witness straightaway to a higher viewpoint, which appears still more spiritual when expressed in that general thesis: Like is known by like."[2] Empedocles, fragment 109 (Diels): "With earth we observe the earth, with ether, the divine ether, with fire, however, the destroying fire, love with love, hate with wretched hate." In this passage the so-called four elements appear on the same level as love and hate as essences, not as 'stuffs.' Nor is the earth the earthly, water—is not our water not even for Empedocles, simply an heir and descendant of this poetic teaching.

III

Let me return to the poet in my search for a way of pointing out the original meaning of this teaching.

The ὅμοια of the Homeric similes, like the ἐναντία of his contrastive effects, as κοινά of the soul and things, are not χωριστά, not set apart from one another. The poet does not set them apart from one another; he relates them to one another, intertwines them and lets their interlacings change. Just this interlacing is the source of animation. The κοινά are live only in it. Not the hard taken by itself alone, without relation to the soft but the hard as something which has become hard, something which subsequently will become soft. But not only this—the poet is on his guard against isolating not only the contraries, but also pairs of contraries. His 'hard' in its presence together with the soft is at the same time and, indeed, essentially and always, among the bright and the dark, the warm and the cold and other pairs of this sort. It is 'among' many. It is alive in this 'betweenness.' The poet does not separate. He does not name. For naming *is* a dividing. He lets [the κοινά] 'become manifest'—manifestation intertwines, intertwining animates. What becomes manifest is life itself, the being of all that is alive, as a totality of changing forces intertwined with one another: the poet's way of giving form to the object holds good for its transparence much as it does for the movement of sounds and tones in the arrangement of words and rhythm. Homer's wisdom is his 'knowing' about the whole of existence: his art is to let this 'knowing' become manifest.

Hence, these κοινά of subject and object are surely not an original many. They would be dead not only if they were separated, but even if they were arrayed alongside one another. They would be words, not essences. Their 'concretion' is their 'having grown together into one another.' There is actually only one κοινόν, whose sides, moments, joints are these κοινά, one κοινὸς λόγος of life itself. Homer sees this κοινόν in the change of forms and events, in the shifting interlacing of its moments, as one and the same.

The *tertia* of the Homeric similes are not single joints, moments of this one, but analogies of a particular interlacing, Analogy detached from the objectivity of the object, serves to make this interlacing transparent. The particularity of the interlacing of the κοινά is a special aspect of the one κοινόν, of what ultimately shines through. The poet's vision and voice aim at this latter.

As the events change the progress of the narrative alters the interlacing of the moments and, with it, the particularity of the aspects. The change itself reveals the single concatenation as a special aspect of their eternal arrangement. After the snow-image of Penelope dissolving into tears the poet continues:

Od. XIX, 209-212:
And the bold Odysseus/pited his sorrowing
Wife deep in his heart. And still/he kept
His gaze fixed and straight, as if his eyes
Were of horn and his brow of iron./
Artfully he hid his tears."

(R.A. Schröder)

αυτὰρ Ὀδύσσευσ
θυμῷ μὲν γοόωσαν ἐὴν ἐλεαίρε γυναῖκα,
ὀφθαλμοὶ δ' ὡς εἰ κέρα ἔστασαν ἠὲ σίδηρος
ἀτρέμας ἐν βλεφάροισιν δόλῳ δ' ὅ γε δάκρυα κεῦθεν.

The simile of melting snow shines through these verses as well, with the force of its transparence, verses which now repeat in a transformed arrangement the conflict of hard and soft and much else which is nameless in the

gestures and behavior of Odysseus. The same existence changes the manner of its visibility.

The Homeric similes are impassioned movement. But, deeper than any change is a rest which inwardly prevails through the restless events. This rest is not, by any means, a subjective repose of the epic, detached poet. Homer is always and everywhere passionately affected. What is at rest is what is seen, not the poet's seeing eye. Movement itself, its passion, is what is at rest: What ultimately shines through, inescapable and eternally fitted together, existence itself, the changeable, as something eternally alike. The classical, as a systematic, not an historical concept, must be based on this unchangeable arrangement of what is ultimately seen. I dared to undertake this task in my essay on the beautiful.

We are now, for the first time, getting closer to that inner meaning in which the first visions of Greek Philosophy harmonize with one another. These visions have their roots in Homer's vision of the world. Homer is closer to its inner meaning than Theophrastus. According to Theophrastus's report concerning γνῶσις τῷ, the ὅμοια seem to be an original many, elements of the inner and the outer, from the mixture and separation of which the particular features of things and their changing structures arise and pass away. The controversial question of knowledge is then whether we know the bitter through the bitter outside of us or through the sweet. The original teaching, however, knows nothing of such an alternative. Homer's knowledge embraces both. It comes about both τῷ ὁμοίῳ as well as τῷ ἐναντιῳ. Parmenides and Heraclitus, too, oppose the separation of contraries. For both their separation is a ψεῦδος. Heraclitus, Fragment 57: "Hesiod is the teacher of most men. He is supposed to know the most he—who does not even know day and night—they are one." Parmenides, Frag. 8, line 53: "Mortals establish two instead of one and in this they go astray: darkness and light, divided from one another, each on its own not the same as the other, both the one and the other for itself." From this division, the πρῶτον ψεῦδος, arises, δόξα the specious knowledge of mortals. If the contraries are inseparable and night and day are one and the same, then the alternative of γνώσις τῷ ὁμοίῃ ὁμοίῳ or ἐναντιῳ is a controversy *within* δόξα.

In Parmenides and Heraclitus alike, naming, too, is in disrepute, along with the separation of these ὅμοια from one another. Naming occurs as separating (Parm., Frag. 9; Heraclitus, Frag. 67). Philosophy, although directed to making conceptual distinctions, begins by discrediting naming. Ὀνομάζειν as naming of things separately is opposed to true νοεῖν. This νοεῖν is *not* 'conceptual' thinking. This νοείν is a seeing, the seeing together of the inseparable.

The 'commons' of the soul and things, on which this knowledge rests, are no more in this philosophy than in Homer an original many, which must be divided and then placed in a sequence. There is an original one, which, being prior to its manyness, articulates itself in the latter as into its own moments. These moments are not anything 'objective,' spread out in space and time, they are *present* to one another: as "continually present even while absent" (Parm., Frag. 2). Thus the very same νοῦς which has to do with truth *sees* (λεύσσει) these moments. There is, therefore, only one 'common.' This 'common' is the 'one' of Anaximander, concealing and securing in itself all oppositions—it is the much-debated ὄν of Parmenides, which never is something of the past, never something of the future, but ἀεὶ νῦν, ὁμοῦ πᾶν, is the eternal present and everything at once; it is the κοινὸς λὸγος of Heraclitus, the essence and styling [Artung] of what is, which is there and insofar as it 'is'—φύσις, which loves to conceal itself (Frag. 123). Attending to φύσις we say and do the true (Frag. 112).

What these thinkers strive gropingly and vainly to say—Heraclitus in riddling words, transmitted to us only in fragments which have grown dumb and been misconstrued, Parmenides in the verses which command us to see what it is unsayable, an unsayable mirrored in a phenomenology of nature, over whose specious essence the goddess of the truth in the hidden holds sway—Homer sees and announces this, by letting it 'appear' without saying it. The vision of the poet outlasts the concepts of the philosopher.

Thus, Homer might help us to understand Heraclitus: Heraclitus, Fragment 67 (Diels):

> [scil. εστὶ μεω] ὁ θεὸς ἡμέρη εὐφρόνη, χείμων θέρος, πόλεμος εἰρήνη, κόρος λιμός, ἀλλοιοῦται δὲ ὅκωσπερ πύρ, ὁπόταν συμμιγῆ θυώμασιν, ὀνομάζεται δὲ καθ' ἡδονὴν ἑκάστου.
>
> ["The God is day night, cold heat, war peace, satiety want; comes different just like fire whenever it is mixed with perfumes it is names after the flavor of each."]

Karl Reinhardt's interpretation emphasizes the oppositions: Being Change Name. It *is* the God, Day Night, Winter Summer, War Peace, Satiety Hunger he *changes* himself only as the fire does, when it is mixed with the perfumes. The *Name* however, is a nugatory choice of each man.[3] Homer's images, shapes, events—the entire world of his objects and their changes *is* the color and lambency of the flame, the changing look of the same, which as one is inescapably fitted and joined to itself, the being of the soul as well as of things—the unknown, which it is the poet's might and secret to let shine through.

The power of philosophy is the living question. Without the latter the testimonies of past thinking remain as dumb

as the things themselves—with it, the one might illumine itself in the other. Thus the secret of animation in simile and contrast in Homer might help us in explaining the inner meaning of the first philosophical question and the first answer.

The very formulation, however, which that secret finds in this explanation, conceals a hidden danger, even though it may be more appropriate to the problem than the concepts of our aesthetics. This danger is the separation of appearance and "idea."

The multicolored world of sensible shapes is for the poet appearance, shining through as appearance, and in this shining through is essence itself and its truth. This essence *is* only in appearing. The appearance *is* itself what appears.

The course of philosophical endeavor splits apart this unity. It devalues appearance into semblance. Its pathos is directed against the mortals, whose "long-experienced habit" (Parm., Frag. 1, line 34), abandoned as they are to changeable things, stumbles in the darkness. Philosophy as it gropes for the true essence uses as its means abstract thought. "Reason" stands opposed to the senses. However, every separation of ὁρατόν and νοητόν, of a *mundus sensibilis* and *mundus intelligibilis*, every *chorismos* of sensible thing and idea, stands powerlessly before the marvel of the beautiful. For precisely this is the marvel and its incomparable power that here thinking happens as perception, the intelligible itself turns into the sensible, unnamed, but visibly there "in person"—the νοητόν itself, this is precisely that ultimate, which in the question of being as "what is sought and gives rise to perplexity from long since and now and in the future" (Aristotle, *Metaph.* Zeta 1) has always been wooed by the greatest names in philosophy.

Indeed, this νοητόν 'is' only as ὁρατόν. It is in no way χωριστόν. Any essence which does not appear lacks essence for any art.

Plato, too, who placed the 'beautiful itself' and the pure vision of it above every visible appearance, knew about this (*Phaedrus* 250e): "It was the lot of beauty alone that the most visible is at the same time the most worthy of love."

Hence, the inner marvel of art, warning against any *chorismos*, accompanies the history of philosophy.

Translator's Notes

1. These references are to G. Hermann's annotated edition of the *Poetics* (Leipzig, 1802) and read in translation: "when the image of peace is set suddenly in contrast, the contest is rendered more terrible"..."light takes from darkness and darkness from light more force than either could ever have had on its own."
2. See Goethe, *dtv-Gesamtausgabe*, Band 41 (Munich, 1963), p.12.
3. See Karl Reinhardt, *Parmenides und die Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie* (Bonn, 1916).